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ABSTRACT

This project investigated attitudes of entering freshmen college women in an attempt to learn whether traditional sex-role ideologies were still predominant, and what the career and educational aspiration levels of these young women were. The variables most concerning the authors were career salience, educational and career aspirations, opinions on the women's movement, and expressions of success or achievement orientation. Seven hypotheses were formulated as well as a questionnaire designed to test these hypotheses. General findings from the study showed that 43 percent of the women gave career salient responses and that the greater proportion of these women were from urban backgrounds. Four-fifths of the career salient women said that their mothers were satisfied with the role of homemaker, and two-thirds of the mothers of these women who were employed had positive feelings about their employment. Detailed analysis of the results is not presented in this paper but will be forthcoming in another document. (Author/PC)

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SEX-ROLE IDEOLOGIES AND CAREER SALIENCE OF COLLEGE WOMEN

A PRELIMINARY REPORT

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SEX-ROLE IDEOLOGIES AND CAREER SALIENCE OF COLLEGE WOMEN

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In September, 1973 we planned a study to investigate attitudes of entering freshman women at the university. We were interested in learning whether traditional sex-role ideologies still predominate and in finding out the career and educational aspiration levels of these young women.

The two objectives we had in mind were (1) to better understand the attitudes of women now entering college, especially in view of publicity given to the women's movement and struggles for equal opportunity in the last few years and (2) to obtain data on these specific women and their values and attitudes which could be used in making decisions and as a base for program planning in the Center for Student Development.

We needed to know about their background and present attitudes in order to plan effective counseling, guidance, programming and services for women which will aid in their self-development and realization of potential.

Some of the variables we were most concerned with were career salience, educational and career aspirations, opinions on the women's movement and expressions of success or achievement

orientation. We formulated a number of tentative hypotheses at the beginning of the study. A first draft of the questionnaire was administered to several freshman women and they were asked for comments and criticisms. A few changes were made after this pre-test.

We also submitted the questionnaire to the university committee on research on human subjects. The committee expressed some concern over our asking for "personal" information such as parents' income and the subjects' opinions of parents' attitudes. As a result of this concern we changed the cover letter to emphasize that participation was voluntary and that questions could be omitted. A sentence was added on the first page stating, "This questionnaire is to be taken on a voluntary basis. Feel free to qualify any of your answers. All answers will be kept confidential." We also had to have each women sign a letter of informed consent before participating.

Two residence halls were used to obtain subjects. Out of approximately four hundred and twenty five freshmen women in the two dorms, two hundred and forty eight participated in the study. Thus there was a voluntary participation rate of fifty eight and four tenths (58.4) per cent. We held meetings with the dorm directors and then with the staff and resident assistants, in which we explained the nature and objectives of the research. The assistants were responsible for having the informed consent letters signed and handing out and collecting the questionnaires. We requested that the women not discuss

the questionnaire among themselves until after they were collected.

There were a total of sixty questions and most of them were multiple choice. However four of the questions were open-ended and on one of these we encouraged the women to write a paragraph or more. In terms of understanding attitudes and the underlying factors in sex-role ideology formation and choice of career patterns this research is on an exploratory level. About one-third of the questions provided ordinal level data. These concerned topics such as projected educational goal, parents' education level and parents' income. About two-thirds of the questions gave us nominal level data.

Most of the hypotheses we were interested in testing emerged from our experience in working with university students. Our impression was that women from rural backgrounds were more family oriented and less career oriented than women from urban areas. We also thought that more women were interested in following the traditional "woman's role", emphasizing marriage and children, than in concentrating on a continuing career. We felt that women students did not possess realistic or accurate knowledge about women in the work force and salaries for women. We felt that most had received very little career guidance, and that of those who had been encouraged to enter specific fields, the majority were pushed towards traditional "women's jobs" such as primary school teaching and nursing. We wondered about what was most important to these women - was it marriage, security,

independence? We also wanted information on topics such as their mothers' work patterns. What were the subjects' attitudes, and their mothers' and fathers' attitudes towards the mother working outside the home?

In this paper data on the subjects' backgrounds, career aspirations and attitudes towards sex-roles and the women's movement are presented. The hypotheses formulated on these topics at the beginning of the study and the data used to test them are discussed. An analysis of data on success themes and achievement motivation will be presented in a future paper.

Testing the Hypotheses

Hypothesis One - The majority of our sample of freshmen women are not career salient.

In order to find out whether women are career salient, we first asked two questions originally used by Angrist (1972). These questions and the answer distributions obtained are given below in Table One and Table Two.

TABLE ONE

(13) Assume that you are trained for the occupation of your choice, that you marry and have children, and that your husband will earn enough so that you will never have to work unless you want to. Under these conditions, which of the following would you prefer?

	Number	Per Cent
1. to participate in clubs or volunteer work	11	4.44
2. to spend time on hobbies, sports or other activities	23	9.27
3. to work part-time in your chosen occupation	97	39.11
4. to work full-time in your chosen occupation	25	10.08
5. to concentrate on home and family	49	19.76
6. other (explain briefly)	24	9.68
7. more than one answer	4	1.61
0. (no answer)	15	6.05

TABLE TWO

(14) Fifteen years from now, would you like to be:

	Number	Per Cent
1. a housewife with no children	0	0
2. a housewife with one or more children	90	36.29
3. an unmarried career woman	4	1.61
4. a married career woman without children	20	8.06
5. a married career woman with children	128	51.61
6. other: what?	3	1.21

If a subject gave answer 3 or 4 on Question 13 and also gave answer 3, 4, or 5 on Question 14 we considered her to be career salient. "Presumably such women foresee working part-time, or full-time, not for financial motives, but because they want to, regardless of children's ages. All other response combinations were considered not career salient." (Angrist, 1972, p. 8)

A cross tabulation was done on the data from these two questions in order to identify subjects giving the career salient response combinations. One hundred and six (106) of the two hundred forty eight (248) subjects gave career salient response combinations. Thus 42.74 per cent of the women in the study can be considered career salient and 57.26 per cent non career salient. Angrist (1972) found that only 7 per cent of female students remained career salient consistently through four years of college. Her data was on 87 women students entering college in 1964 who were questioned early in the fall each year for four years. The data from Angrist's study was collected beginning about ten years ago. She found that the per cent of seniors who were career salient was approximately 43 per cent. Only 30 per cent of freshmen (of the 87 who went through all four years) were career salient. Since our results show 42.74 per cent of freshmen women are career salient, this indicates a significant rise in the proportion who are career salient. (If the women from our group remaining in school were questioned after three years the

promportions expressing career salience would probably be even higher.)

We hypothesized that the majority are not career salient. Our hypothesis is upheld since only 42.74 per cent exhibit career salience as measured by these questions. However, the proportion is greater than we expected and greater than the proportion in the past study.

Hypothesis Two

We predicted that a greater proportion of subjects from an urban background than from farms and rural backgrounds would be career salient.

There were one hundred and eighty three (183) women who lived in a city or town during the last five years and sixty-two (62) who lived on a farm or in the country. Thus about 74 per cent were from an urban background and 25 per cent from a rural background. When cross tabulations were done for career salience and urban or rural background we found that 44.3 per cent of urban women and 38.7 per cent of rural women showed career salience. The results were in the predicted direction but the difference between the two groups is not as great as we had thought.

Hypothesis Three

More of the career salient subjects had mothers employed outside the home (at least part-time) than had mothers not employed outside the home.

In testing this hypothesis we first looked at our basic data on mothers working. This data is given below in Table Three.

TABLE THREE

(Questions 24 through 27)

Was your mother employed outside the home?

(Question 24) When you were 5 years or younger

	Number	Per Cent
1. full time	30	12.10
2. part time	19	7.66
3. not employed outside	156	62.90
4. don't remember	12	4.84
5. not applicable	20	8.06
0. (no answer)	11	4.44

(Question 25) When you were 6-10 years

1. full time	31	12.50
2. part time	39	15.73
3. not employed outside	146	58.87
4. don't remember	3	1.21
5. not applicable	19	7.66
0. (no answer)	10	4.03

(Question 26) When you were 11-15 years

1. full time	54	21.77
2. part time	62	25.00
3. not employed outside	101	40.73
4. don't remember	4	1.61
5. not applicable	18	7.26
0. (no answer)	9	3.63

(Question 27) When you were 16+

1. full time	72	29.03
2. part time	61	24.60
3. not employed outside	88	35.48
4. don't remember	1	.40
5. not applicable	18	7.26
0. (no answer)	8	3.23

Table Three shows that the number and proportion of mothers working increases steadily with the age of the child. When the subjects were five years or younger the per cent of mothers working (combining full-time and part-time) was only 19.76 per cent. By the time the subjects were sixteen the per cent of mothers working had risen to 53.63 per cent. There was a larger increase in the proportion working part-time than in the proportion working full-time. The proportion working full-time when the subjects were sixteen was a little less than 2 1/2 times the per cent working full-time when the subjects were five years or younger. The proportion working part-time in the most recent period was a little less than 3 1/2 times the per cent working part-time in the earliest period.

Using the results in Table Three and the results from questions 13 and 14, cross tabulations were done to find out what proportion of the career salient women had working mothers in each of the four time periods.

The results of these cross tabulations are given in Table Four.

TABLE FOUR

MOTHERS' EMPLOYMENT; BY AGE OF CAREER SALIENT WOMEN

	Mothers Employed Outside	Not Employed Outside
Age 5 or younger	26	75
Age 6 - 10 years	37	64
Age 11 - 15 years	61	41
Age 16 and over	67	37

During the earliest period about 1/4 (one fourth) of the mothers of career salient women were employed. During the second period (ages 6 - 10) a little more than one third (1/3) of them were employed. During the third period over 60 per cent were employed and after the subjects were sixteen or older about two thirds (2/3) of the mothers were employed outside. Since our prediction was that more career salient subjects had mothers who were employed outside than had mothers not employed, the results uphold our prediction for ages eleven through sixteen; but not for the two earlier periods. The greatest change in proportion of mothers employed came between the 6 - 10 years period and the 11 - 15 years period.

In comparing the results for the total sample with the results for career salient women we found that for each age period a higher proportion of the career salient group than of the total group had employed mothers. The differences were greatest for the later age periods.

What effect does the mother's employment or non employment outside the home have on the daughter's career salience? Is the effect greater at some ages than others? We are doing some further analyses of these results in order to better understand this influence. The next hypotheses are also related to the employment of the mother.

We asked the women about their feelings and their mothers' and

fathers' feelings about the mothers' outside employment. The results are given in Table Five below.

TABLE FIVE

(Questions 28 through 30)

If your mother did work outside the home at any of these times:

(Question 28) How do you think your mother felt about working?

		Number	Per Cent
1.	very positive	91	36.69
2.	mildly positive	44	17.74
3.	mildly negative	12	4.84
4.	very negative	0	0.00
5.	don't know	14	5.65
6.	not applicable	30	12.10
0.	(no answer)	57	22.98

(Question 29) How do you think your father felt about it?

1.	very positive	49	19.76
2.	mildly positive	60	24.19
3.	mildly negative	16	6.45
4.	very negative	2	.81
5.	don't know	28	11.29
6.	not applicable	35	14.11
0.	(no answer)	58	23.38

(Question 30) How did you as a child feel about your mother's working?

1.	very positive	53	21.37
2.	mildly positive	55	22.18
3.	mildly negative	22	8.87
4.	very negative	3	1.21
5.	don't know	18	7.26
6.	not applicable	40	16.13
0.	(no answer)	57	22.98

Hypotheses four and five make some predictions about the career salient women. We used cross tabulations again to test these hypotheses.

Hypotheses Four and Five

(4) Most of the career salient women's mothers who worked outside the home had positive feelings about their work.

(5) Most of the fathers of these women also had positive feelings about the mother's employment.

Out of the 106 career salient women, seventy (about 66 per cent) said that their mothers' attitudes towards working outside the home were either very positive or mildly positive. Fifty eight of the 106 (about 54 per cent) said their fathers' attitudes towards their mother working outside the home were positive. Thus a few more than half the fathers and about two thirds of the mothers had positive feelings about the mothers' outside employment. The prediction on the mothers' feelings was more strongly supported than the one on the fathers' feelings.

After asking about the parents' attitudes towards the mother's outside employment we asked the women whether they thought their mothers found the role of homemaker satisfying. The results are given in Table Six.

TABLE SIX

(31) Do you think your mother found the role of homemaker satisfying?

	Number	Per Cent
1. not at all	8	3.23
2. slightly satisfying	24	9.68
3. mostly satisfying	101	40.73
4. entirely satisfying	95	38.31
5. don't know	20	8.06

The answer most frequently given to question 31 was "mostly satisfying" and the next most frequent was "entirely satisfying". Over 79 per cent of the women thought their mothers were in one of these two categories. Only eight of the 248 subjects felt their mothers found the role of homemaker not at all satisfying.

Hypothesis Six

We hypothesized that more of the career salient subjects think their mothers were only slightly satisfied or not at all satisfied with the role of homemaker, than think their mothers were mostly or entirely satisfied.

Cross tabulations were done using answers to questions 13 and 14 and question 31. Twenty of the career salient women think their mothers found the role of homemaker "not at all" or only "slightly satisfying". Eighty-one of the career salient women think their mothers found the role of homemaker "mostly or entirely satisfying". It is interesting that out of the total of thirty-two (32) women who answered slightly or not at all satisfying, twenty (20) of these were career salient. If we compare these proportions to the proportion of the total sample who are career salient (about 42 per cent), we see that while about one-fifth (1/5) of the career salient women gave the first two answers, only twelve (12) out of 142 women who are not career salient (about 8 per cent) gave these two answers.

However, our original hypothesis was not upheld since about only one-fifth (1/5) of the career salient women gave the first two answers and about 4/5 of them gave the "mostly or entirely satisfying" answer.

Hypothesis Seven

A greater proportion of career salient women than non career salient women said they sometimes or often wished they were men.

The subjects were asked if they ever wished they were men. The answer distribution is given in Table Seven.

TABLE SEVEN

(45) Do you ever wish you were a man?

	Number	Per Cent
1. yes, often	8	3.23
2. no, never	184	74.19
3. yes, sometimes	55	22.18
0. no answer	1	.40
(yes, total)	63	25.41

The number of subjects who are career salient who gave answers 1 or 3 was calculated. A total of thirty of these women said they sometimes or often wished they were men. Since thirty (30) out of 106 career salient women said yes, and thirty-three (33) out of 142 non career salient women said yes, the proportion who wished they were men is greater for the career salient group. Therefore the hypothesis is upheld by the results.

Several other hypotheses were formulated and the data which is relevant to those are still being analyzed.

A number of questions were used to probe the interests and sex-role ideologies of the subjects. One of the questions asked was "What are your plans for the next five years?" The answers given are presented in Table Eight.

TABLE EIGHT

(12) What are your plans for the next five years?

		Number	Per Cent
1.	finish education and career	114	35.40
2.	travel and adventure	36	11.18
3.	marriage and family	19	5.90
4.	finish education, marriage and family	85	26.40
5.	marriage and career	46	14.29
6.	involvement in social issues	5	1.55
7.	other (please specify)	11	3.41
0.	more than 3 answers and no answer	6	1.86

About 35 per cent said their plans are to finish their education and get involved in a career. The next most frequently marked answer (26.4 per cent) was "finished education, marriage and family". Only 1.5 per cent answered "involvement in social issues". In 1970 Hoffman and Hoeflin asked 420 freshman and sophomore women in Kansas colleges "If you could do what you wanted most in the world, what would you do now?" Forty nine (49) per cent marked the "travel and adventure" category. Eight (8) per cent said "involvement in social issues". When asked what they wanted most to do immediately after college, thirty seven (37) per cent answered "travel and adventure" and nine (9) per cent "involvement in social issues. Comparing the results of their study (on a presumably similar population) with the present study it appears that there is quite a difference between what women "want most to do now and after college" and what their "plans for the next five years" are. A large proportion want travel and adventure, but are planning on finishing their education and then having a career, or marrying and having a family. In Hoffman's study only one (1) percent said they wanted to continue their education (after a bachelor's degree), while in our study about twenty-nine (29) per cent of the women said they plan to complete a level of education beyond a four year degree. The answer distribution for planned level of education is given below in Table Nine.

TABLE NINE

(38) Level of education freshman women plan to complete.

		Number	Per Cent
1.	a year or two of college	30	12.10
2.	bachelor's degree	140	56.45
3.	some graduate work	24	9.68
4.	M.A. or equivalent	21	8.47
5.	Ph.D.	3	1.21
6.	professional degree such as law or medicine	24	9.68
0.	no answer and error	6	2.42

Some of the results mentioned above have not been completely analyzed yet. For example, correlation tests are being done using the educational aspiration levels given in Table Nine and data on the mothers' and fathers' educational achievement. We are also testing for correlations between parents' income and the subjects' educational aspirations. The results of these tests and data on the subjects' attitudes towards the women's liberation movement will be given in the oral presentation.

Summary

In testing the seven hypotheses presented above we found that some were supported by the data and some were not supported. We predicted that the majority of the freshman women would not give career salient responses. About forty-three (43) per cent gave career salient responses and about fifty-seven (57) per cent did not. Thus our hypothesis was supported. However, the proportion who are career salient is greater than that found in a past study and greater than we anticipated.

We hypothesized that a greater proportion of subjects from urban backgrounds than rural backgrounds would be career salient. We found that 44.3 per cent of urban women and 38.7 per cent of rural women are career salient. Thus there is a difference in the predicted

direction, but the difference is not great.

We thought that more of the mothers of career salient women had been employed than had not been employed. The results supported our hypothesis for the two age periods (of the subject) from eleven years through sixteen years, but not for the younger ages. The most interesting result found was that for each age period a higher proportion of the career salient women than of the total sample had mothers employed outside the home.

It was hypothesized that most of the mothers of career salient women who were employed had positive feelings about their employment, and that most of the fathers in this group also had positive feelings about the mothers' employment. About two-thirds (2/3) of the mothers and about fifty four (54) per cent of the fathers had positive feelings, according to the daughters. Thus the prediction was more strongly supported for the mothers than the fathers.

It was thought that more of the career salient women would rate their mothers as only slightly or not at all satisfied with the role of homemaker, than would rate them as mostly or entirely satisfied. However about four-fifths (4/5) of the women said their mothers were satisifed and only about one-fifth (1/5) of them said their mothers were not at all or only slightly satisifed. Thus our prediction was not supported. However we did find that while 1/5 of the career

salient women gave the least satisfied responses, only eight (8) per cent of the non career salient women gave these responses. A greater proportion of career salient women thought their mothers were not at all or only slightly satisfied with the role of homemaker.

It was also hypothesized that a greater proportion of career salient than non career salient women sometimes or often wished they were men. We found that thirty (30) of the 106 career salient and thirty-three (33) of the 142 non career salient women had wished they were men. Thus about 28 per cent of the career salient group and 23 per cent of the non career salient group had wished they were men, at least sometimes. The proportion is greater for the career salient women, but only by five per cent.

The differences found between the career salient and non career salient groups in testing these hypotheses are now being analyzed further and statistical tests of significance will be done on some of these differences.

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